

THE OFFICE OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

“Improving Rhode Island’s Health and Human Services System”

Overview

Rhode Island’s five health and human service departments affect the lives of virtually all of our state’s citizens. Together, the Department of Children, Youth and Families, the Department of Elderly Affairs, the Department of Health, the Department of Human Services and the Department of Mental Health, Retardation and Hospitals provide direct services to nearly one-third of the state’s citizens at any given time. The departments also work to protect the overall health, safety and independence of all Rhode Islanders.

Today, the cost of the services the departments provide is upwards of \$2.3 billion per year, or nearly 41% of the state’s budget. This cost is expected to continue to rise because consumer demands for health and human services are growing and becoming more complex. Meeting these demands necessitates greater interdepartmental coordination and collaboration that draws on the strengths of the state’s health and human services system.

Findings

A detailed review of the five health and human service departments by the Governor’s Fiscal Fitness team determined that:

- The overall coordination of planning, budgeting, policy-making, and communications among the departments would improve service delivery and enhance the ability to appropriately respond to the increasing demands of customers;
- Addressing jurisdictional overlap between agencies would remove the potential for confusion and duplication;
- Coordinating multiple access doors across agencies, and using integrated eligibility and tracking procedures, would make evaluating outcomes, quality assurance and fiscal integrity less difficult, while making it more user-friendly and accessible for individuals and families;
- Structured and formal inter-departmental coordination would clearly benefit consumers, while enhancing the environment for employees as well.

Executive Order

With this information in mind, in March of 2004, Governor Carcieri signed an Executive Order creating the Office of Health and Human Services (OHHS) to, under the leadership of a managing director, facilitate and formalize cooperation and coordination among the state's health and human services departments. The Order was the first step in the Governor's plan for establishing a statutory cabinet-level health and human services executive office or secretariat. Legislation will be introduced in the General Assembly in order to place in statute the mission and authority of the Secretariat – Office of Health and Human Services.

Months of Progress

In the Executive Order, the governor recognized that greater coordination of the system can only be achieved and sustained through the concerted effort on the part of all five departments. Accordingly, the directors of the five departments have met with Jane Hayward, Managing Director of the OHHS, regularly over the past several months to develop a structural framework for the new executive office and a plan for coordinating key administrative functions in the areas of budget and finance, administration, policy and planning, and communications.

As part of this process, the directors collaborated to develop a proposed mission, vision, values and set of goals to both guide the restructuring process now underway and to serve as the basis for the executive office's operations in the future. They are as follows:

VISION

To better serve the people and communities of Rhode Island by designing a simple and transparent health and human services system that emphasizes equity, access, quality and positive outcomes in the design and delivery of services and program benefits.

MISSION

The Office of Health and Human Service is a formally structured entity offering a consumer-centered approach to service delivery with the capacity to meet the diverse and changing needs of the eligible communities we serve. It provides a single point of interdepartmental collaboration, coordination and integration. The Office of Health and Human Services supports the unique mission of each Department and constantly strives to advance best practices and the sharing of resources in the pursuit of excellence in the delivery of high quality efficient and effective services. The Office of Health and Human Service strives to balance this commitment to ensure both access and service excellence with sound financial stewardship of limited public health and human service dollars.

GOALS

- Adapt to the diverse and changing needs of communities we serve;
- Preserve and enhance the core missions of the departments;
- Integrate and enhance the quality and efficiency of administrative functions;
- Establish a coordinated policy agenda for the future; and
- Assure system-wide accountability.

HHS VALUES

The Office of Health and Human Services will:

- Achieve the best possible outcomes for the consumers HHS serves;
- Strive for excellence by sharing and implementing best practices and promoting innovation in service design and delivery;
- Foster partnerships among the departments and with the community;
- Preserve and support the unique missions of each of the departments in HHS;
- Value employees, their work, and professional growth and career development;
- Maximize the use of all available financial resources; and
- Provide responsible financial stewardship.

In addition, workgroups comprised of representatives from each of the five departments were also assembled at the beginning of the summer and have been meeting regularly to review current practices and make recommendations in each of the targeted functional areas.

OHHS Framework

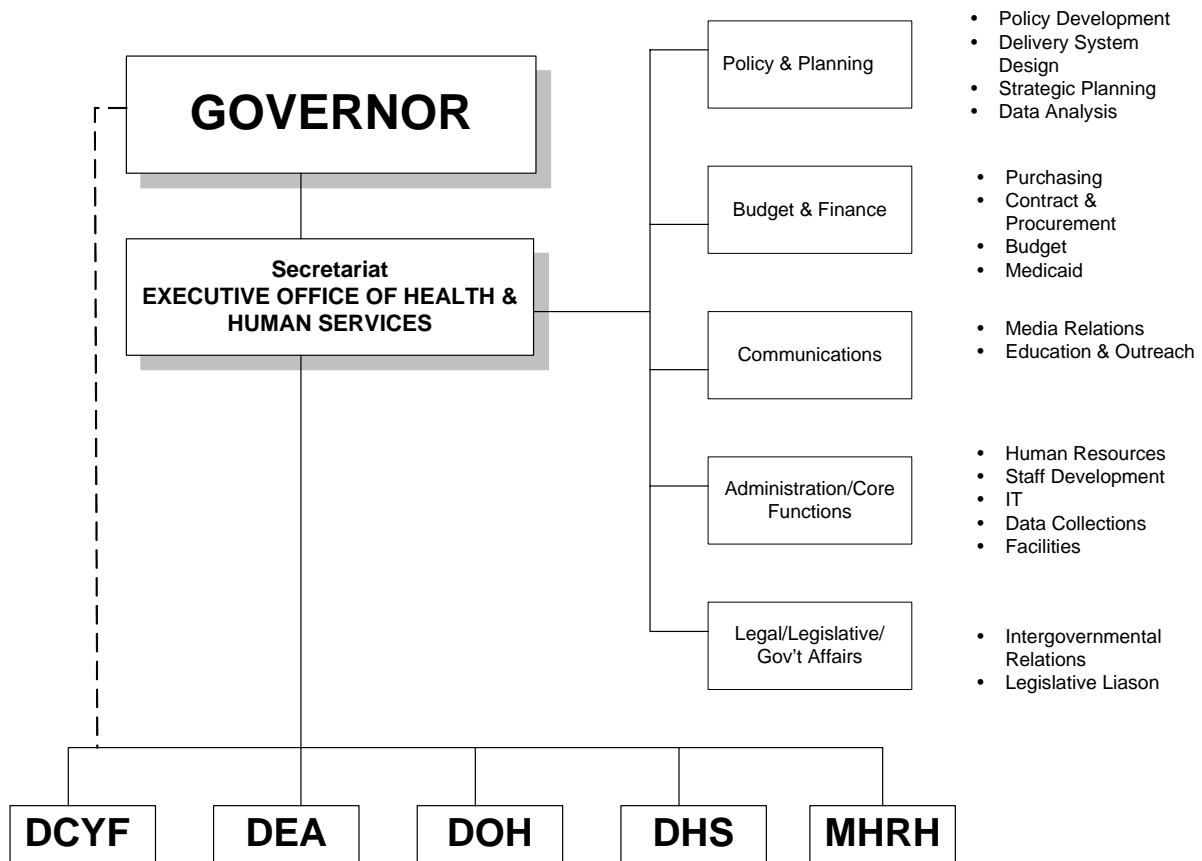
Together, the directors of the five health and human service departments and the managing director have agreed to a framework for the executive office that, if adopted, will facilitate achieving the proposed mission, vision and goals developed over the summer. Within this framework, the general areas of responsibility and authority for the office are as follows:

1. Hold each department director accountable for their administrative, fiscal and program actions in the conduct of their respective powers and the duties of their agencies;
2. Resolve administrative, jurisdictional, operational, program, or policy conflicts between departments and their leaders;
3. Direct the development of policy goals, objectives, and plans that are necessary to the effective and efficient operation of the state's health and human service system;
4. Coordinate the core administration service functions assigned to maximize the use of all available resources; and
5. Prepare, for consideration by the governor, a comprehensive budget for the state's health and human services agencies and any functional areas assigned to the office.

This proposed framework preserves the primary missions and identities of the five departments while, at the same time, provides the office with legal authority and flexibility necessary for furthering the goals of improving service, efficiency, accountability and coordination across the health and human service system.

As a result, it will ensure that this system has the capacity to meet the growing and changing demands of Rhode Islanders today and in the future.

Proposed Organizational Chart



Next Steps

OHHS initiatives currently underway are:

- Children's behavioral health;
- Pharmacy purchasing;
- Contracting;
- Staff development; and
- Coordinated budget.

Legislation incorporating the proposed framework for the office needs to be drafted and introduced to the General Assembly in the coming months in order to establish the executive office by statute. At the same time, the managing director and the workgroups will continue to identify barriers, develop solutions and implement changes that will make the state's health and human services system stronger and more responsive for Rhode Islanders.

This will be an open process, in which the work will be guided every step of the way by consumers, advocates, employees and other participants in the health and human services delivery system who have stake in ensuring access to high quality health and human services.